

'contemplative/mystical experience' are nonsensical, as all language is self-reflexive, and all experience is interpretation. Such texts would be better identified as devotional, abstract, didactic or anagogical. Another common error is that affective technically refers to motivation, not to experience. In his reading of Ambrose and his sources, Schwanda uses the existential anachronisms of the Cartesian subject. It is folly to apply a methodology that allows for only one epistemology (linear self-consciousness) to texts that assume two epistemologies (the second being the larger, more rational and objective deep mind, which is out of sight but not influence). It is folly to apply a methodology that looks for closure to texts that lead the reader into infinite openness.² The author wrongly equates so-called spiritual direction, which grew out of the Counter-Reformation, with pre-Reformation practices of consulting the elders or having a confessor. He even attempts to put Ambrose on the procrustean grid of a modern system for categorising 'experience' called 'the spiritual movement matrix'. To sum up, it is quite possible that Ambrose in his time stood outside the solipsistic experiential extravaganza that characterises much of today's studies of religious people and their texts, but he needs to be examined through a more independent, sympathetic and epistemologically accurate lens.

OXFORD

MAGGIE ROSS

Aspects de l'érudition hagiographique aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. By Bernard Joassart. (École Pratique de Hautes Études. Sciences Historiques et Philologiques, 5. Hautes Etudes médiévales et modernes, 99.) Pp. ix+181 incl. 2 figs. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2011. €45.54 (paper). 978 2 600 01360 4p; 0073 0955

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This is a welcome book. Bernard Joassart, who is himself a member of the Société des Bollandistes, reconstructs the foundation and evolution of historical erudition in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jean Bolland (1596–1665) was the founder, and first editor, of the *Acta Sanctorum*, a critical edition of the *Lives* of the saints, which were ordered according to the calendar, relied on authentic sources and were exuberantly annotated. The idea, however, was developed by the Dutch Jesuit Heribert Rosweyde, who died before the first two volumes were published at Antwerp in 1643. Joassart quotes *in extenso* from the preface to the *Acta Sanctorum*, elegantly translated into French (pp. 11–44). The text is an important source for the formation of *Quellenforschung* in the early modern period and the history of Catholic historiography in the era of confessionalisation. The systematic recourse to the manuscript tradition and the philological interpretation of the sources should discredit Protestant criticism against Catholic hagiography. Joassart then moves to the second great historical enterprise of Catholic *Quellenforschung* in the seventeenth century, the *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis S. Benedicti*, the history of the saints of the Benedictine Order, of which the most erudite of all Maurist scholars, Jean

² See Maggie Ross, 'Behold not the cloud of experience', in E. A. Jones (ed.), *The medieval mystical tradition in England, VIII*, Woodbridge 2012.

Mabillon, published the first volume in 1668 (pp. 45–82). The following chapter demonstrates philological criticism at work: in 1675 the Bollandists doubted the popular story told by the Carmelites that their order was founded by the Old Testament prophet Elijah. Their ‘de-constructivist’ approach was condemned as heretical by the Spanish inquisition (pp. 87–124). Finally, Joassart elucidates the Bollandists’ fate in the eighteenth century, introducing some scholars like Adrien Baillet, Jean Lebeuf and Claude Chastelain who were more interested in reconstructing church history than editing texts. The Bollandists’ innovative undertaking was suppressed when the Society of Jesus was abolished in 1773, and their famous library was soon dispersed. By that date fifty volumes of the *Acta Sanctorum* had been published. But in 1837 the Society was re-established and its work resumed (pp. 125–63). This book is less an intellectual synthesis than a collection of key documents, mainly in translation, illuminating the history of the Bollandists and the Maurists. The author cites some important French and Italian contributions to the subject, but he seems not to be familiar with recent Anglo-Saxon and German scholarship on the history of historiography and hagiography. Even Arnaldo Momigliano’s prominent studies on *Wissenschaftsgeschichte* and the intellectual history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are absent. But the author would certainly agree that he does not intend to integrate his study into the wider context of the history of learning and scholarship in the the early modern period; he is happy to provide ‘aspects de l’érudition hagiographique’.

BERNE

STEFAN REBENICH

Feminism, absolutism, and Jansenism. Louis XIV and the Port-Royal nuns. By Daniella Kostroun. Pp. xiii + 273. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. £55. 978 1 107 00045 2

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Over the last three decades historians have reaffirmed the importance of Jansenism in Old Regime politics and how the movement established important forms of resistance to various institutional authorities. But, as Daniella Kostroun notes, the historiography has separated the convent of Port-Royal, the seventeenth-century heart of Jansenism, from this history. Her book reintegrates Port-Royal and sheds light on two overlapping areas of early modern French history: the evolution of absolutism and the early modern history of women and gender. Kostroun begins with a significant question: ‘Why, then, did Louis xiv destroy Port-Royal?’ Both the French crown and the Port-Royal nuns believed in the renewal and reform of the Church. But where Louis xiv adopted a strictly top-down approach, the nuns placed individual conscience and their convent’s integrity above royal, papal and episcopal commands. Beginning with Cardinal Mazarin, the crown linked divine right absolutism to the persecution of Port-Royal. Louis xiv singled out Port-Royal because it encapsulated all the woes of religious dissension (heresy, recalcitrant women and independent-minded theologians). Port-Royal also became a vehicle for Louis xiv to affirm his regalian prerogatives when he intervened in the convent’s administration and prevented the nuns from electing an abbess. Moreover, the king interpreted the persecution and destruction of Port-Royal as